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# Recreation Strategy for the



Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison  
National Forests

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THE RECREATION STRATEGY  
FOR THE  
GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE AND GUNNISON  
NATIONAL FORESTS

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## THE RECREATION STRATEGY

This document provides a detailed strategy for implementing the Forest Plan for the recreation resources on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. This strategy does not develop new or additional direction beyond that found in goals, objectives, Forest Direction or Direction for Management Areas of the plan. It does relate direction to the Ranger Districts in terms of specific areas of regional, national, and international interest. This strategy does allow the recreation managers to organize management activities which will allow for the implementation of the Forest Plan. By use of this Forest Recreation Strategy, recreation managers will be able to focus recreation activities, propose budgets, and communicate with the public. This Forest Recreation Strategy also implements the National Recreation Strategy, which was developed in 1990 and addressed recreation as an emphasis on all National Forests.

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests is the third largest administered National Forest in the lower 48 states and, as such, offers opportunities for almost the entire spectrum of dispersed outdoor recreation activities. There is a need to recognize and manage our recreational resources as a viable and important forest resource. With the onset of the aging of America, and to meet the continually increasing demand for tourism and outdoor recreation, we need a well thought-out strategy for managing outdoor recreation on this Forest. New recreational activities and equipment continue to emerge and the demand for the land-base on which "to play" will continue.

The Forest Recreation Strategy is intended to answer the question of "Specifically, how will we implement the National Recreation Strategy and the Forest Plan on this Forest?". The answer to this question therefore provides the broad guidance for recreation on this Forest. It is important to recognize this strategy should intentionally be dynamic, and under the umbrella of the Forest Plan, should have the flexibility to change as the supply and demand for recreation opportunities change (i.e., social attitudes that change, physical changes in the land, constantly changing budgets).

The development of this strategy also provides a forum for continued dialog with the visitors who use and care about this Forest.

This strategy will commit the total forces of recreation management and the recreation resources to assist in rural economic development. It will also assist the forest recreation manager in developing further credibility with our internal and external customers.

It should be recognized there are limitations and constraints to this Forest Recreation Strategy. Recognizing this feature of limitations, it is important to know that the Forest Recreation Strategy will not:

- provide site-specific recreation direction for individual districts. Each district will be responsible for developing a district-wide recreation strategy that is specific to all local concerns. Each district recreation strategy will be completed and approved by September 30, 1995.
- be a specific NEPA decision document.
- attempt to be the cure-all for all recreation problems occurring on this Forest.
- provide additional direction for those areas already congressionally designated or recognized by specific management direction i.e., congressionally-designated wilderness areas, scenic byways, national recreation trails, campgrounds or other developed recreation sites.



- guarantee individual project funding.
- make specific decisions concerning ROS and travel management.

### **ROS and Travel Management**

For the purposes of this Forest Recreation Strategy, a brief discussion of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Travel Management needs to occur.

#### **ROS**

The concept of ROS is a framework which answers questions concerning both the allocation and the management of recreation opportunities. ROS is distinguished by varying conditions ranging from modern and developed to primitive and undeveloped. The ROS is that combination of physical, biological, social and managerial conditions which form the different settings in which recreation activities can occur.

The ROS system is also an accepted recreation planning procedure for the Forest Plan and, as such, the ROS will continue to be used during all phases of recreation planning. The existing ROS levels in the Forest Plan are the inventoried present values.

It is not the intent of this Forest Recreation Strategy to make any decisions concerning the present ROS direction. The existing ROS inventory will be utilized when recreational activities are proposed. Each district will be responsible for updating the ROS classification during the Forest Plan revision (1997). Because of the multitude of misconceptions concerning the ROS system (i.e., "it's a zoning process"), there needs to be an aggressive program to inform the interested public as to what the process is and how it works. Forest and district personnel will be responsible to initiate this action.

#### **Travel Management**

Because of resource limitations and conflicts, not all uses or users can be accommodated on each acre. As use has increased over the years, the importance of managing travel has likewise grown. This has resulted in our need to manage travel.

Making travel management decisions a part of the land and resource planning process should provide for appropriate coordination with all uses. This includes adequate public involvement, consideration of the environmental, social and economic factors, integration with other programs and coordination with other agencies. It is important that full consideration be given to providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The total travel management planning and implementation process for this Forest will be accomplished by the revision of the Forest Plan (1997). Each Ranger District is responsible to accomplish this task. As with the ROS system, there is a public sensitivity to "travel management". Recognizing this sensitivity, each Ranger District needs to develop an aggressive program which explains what the travel management process is and how it works. It is not the intent of this Forest Recreation Strategy to make any decisions concerning travel management decisions.

#### **The Vision**

Having set the stage for the Forest Recreation Strategy, it is appropriate to develop a vision statement for the management of the recreation resources on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. This vision statement reflects that:

As we enter the 21st century, this Forest will implement the National and Regional Recreation Strategy with imagination and enthusiasm by emphasizing:

- Customers
- Partnerships
- Services
- Marketing
- Recreation settings
- State-of-the-art technology

This Forest will have sufficiently staffed, well-trained and energized recreation champions at all levels and in all aspects of outdoor recreation.

The managers of outdoor recreation on this Forest will be recognized, trusted, and respected by customers and peers for their leadership in providing a consistent, diverse supply of outdoor recreation settings and opportunities.

The managers of the recreation resource must recognize the cultural, economic and social characteristics of our public and strive to contribute to the economic diversity and quality of life in Southwest Colorado and the entire region, through providing the leadership for the direction of our unique recreational opportunities.

Bring all Forest recreation resources in balance with other forest resources as directed by the Forest Land Management Plan.

The role of the recreation manager on this Forest will be to provide a strong visible leadership in outdoor recreation and customer service, by being advocates and implementers of a blend of National Forest settings and well-maintained facilities that support a variety of recreation opportunities.



## DESIGNATED AREAS

A number of high-valued, designated recreation areas have been identified throughout the Forest. These recreation areas presently provide significant regional, national and/or international recreational opportunities. These areas are either discussed within the Forest Plan or they presently have, or shortly will have, specific management direction attached to them. Thus, no further management direction in this document is needed for these areas.

These recreation areas are:

1. The three ski areas permitted on the forest are as follows:

The Telluride Ski Area  
The Crested Butte Ski Area  
The Powderhorn Ski Area

2. All or parts of eight congressionally-designated Wilderness Areas located on this Forest encompass a total of 504,000 acres. These Wilderness Areas were designated by the 1964 Wilderness Act and/or the 1980 Colorado Wilderness Act. These Wilderness Areas are as follows:

Big Blue  
West Elk  
La Garita  
Collegiate Peaks  
Raggeds  
Lizard Head  
Maroon Bells-Snowmass  
Mount Sneffels

3. All or parts of six National Scenic Byways are located on this Forest. A "National Scenic Byway" is a roadway having exceptional scenic, historic, recreational, ecological or cultural values. The present Forest designated byways are as follows:

The Grand Mesa Byway  
The Alpine Loop Back-Country Byway  
The San Juan Skyway  
The Silver Thread Byway  
The Unaweep/Tabeguache Byway  
The West Elk Loop Byway

4. Various cultural resource sites have been identified and inventoried. There are also a number of historical areas that have a high density of sites. These sites are sensitive and remain confidential so as to prevent further damage/vandalism to the sites.
5. One paleontological site (Dry Mesa) has been discovered and is currently under special-use permit to Brigham Young University. Further work continues at the site.

## SIGNIFICANT AREAS

To provide for future recreation direction, it is necessary to determine the existing opportunities which can be utilized. This Forest has long been recognized as having the physical attributes to provide a unique spectrum of developed and dispersed recreation activities ranging from a high concentration of developed campgrounds in the Taylor River canyon to an isolated wilderness experience within the Big Blue Wilderness to concentrated meadow camping in the Illium Valley during the Telluride Blue Grass Festival.

This section reflects a listing of identified, significant areas on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests which offer a potential for continuing to provide a special emphasis within this spectrum of recreational activities. All of these identified areas are considered to be regional, national and/or international in scope. These areas have been identified as Developed Recreation Areas and Dispersed Recreation Areas.

Developed Recreation Areas: Generally, all developed recreation areas on the Forest will:

- provide for total accessibility.
- within three years, develop and begin the implementation of long-range vegetative rehabilitation plans so the vegetative conditions of the site are protected and extended.
- bring the current developed recreation facilities up to existing standards.
- promote partnerships and Challenge-Cost Share (CCS) projects to enhance the developed recreation facilities.
- develop state-of-the-art techniques which identify customer needs and demands.
- provide state-of-the-art developed recreation facilities in any new reconstruction and/or construction.
- identify and plan for all long-term maintenance needs.
- be evaluated for the possibility of
  - inclusion into the concessionaire program
  - inclusion into the national reservation system (MISTIX).

Three specific areas presently furnish the majority of the developed camping facilities on the Forest. These areas will be managed to continue to provide for the significant concentrations of developed sites on the Forest. These three complexes of developed recreation areas are:

1. The Grand Mesa: This area provides a number of developed camping sites, day-use areas, fishing and boating access, easily accessed hiking trails, information centers, and permitted lodges which furnish rooms, supplies, rental boats/horses and food. Numerous lakes are adjacent to the developed sites and provide for a wide variety of water-based activities. Year-round recreational seasons emphasize the demand for continuous year-round services.

Future Emphasis - Further development and/or reconstruction of existing facilities should provide for the modern accommodations demanded by the forest visitor. Hardened surfaces for parking and trails are appropriate. Designated camping pads for tents lessen the impact on campground vegetation. Demand for fishing-related activities (i.e., fishing piers, boat launch sites) can be planned into the new construction of the developed sites. Given the existing terrain, total disabled



accessibility can be easily achieved within the developed sites. Work with permittees, lodges and other private business to jointly provide various high-quality experiences for the visitor while they are in the area.

2. The Taylor River Canyon: This area currently contains the highest concentration of developed camping/picnicking facilities on the Forest. The Taylor River Canyon is recognized locally, regionally, and nationally as being able to provide unique recreational opportunities in conjunction with the local scenic beauty. This area has consistently met the intense user demand to the point now where these existing developed sites are being degraded in terms of physical camping facilities, the immediate campground vegetation and the quality of the camping experiences. Camping, fishing and fishing access, day-use areas, water-based recreation, commercial outfitting/guiding for rafting, watching various types of wildlife and trailhead parking are the major uses occurring in the canyon. There are also private commercial ventures within the area which depend on a portion of the clientele coming out of the developed sites.

Future emphasis - Recognize that the Taylor River Canyon has reached its maximum capacity in terms of further development of new campgrounds. Determine which recreational uses are compatible with the recreation resources within the canyon and then establish carrying capacities for all uses within the canyon. Update the existing facilities to reflect the current regional and national demand for larger parking spurs, better water systems, improved toilet facilities, hardened campground roads, designated camping pads, safe and adequate fishing sites alongside the highway. Because of the limited availability of suitable lands for further campground construction, the existing facilities need to become more efficient in terms of site utilization and capacities. Trailhead sites need adequate vehicle parking and horse facilities. The entire canyon has the potential for a unique pedestrian/biking trail which would allow for a "watchable wildlife" experience (Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep) and total accessibility from one end of the canyon to the other. Work with special-use permittees and private businesses to provide high-quality experiences for the forest user.

3. The Telluride Area: This area also provides a number of existing developed sites and day-use areas. There has been a tremendous increase in summer use during festival time in Telluride with the capacity of the developed sites being exceeded. The San Juan Skyway also contributes to increased numbers of people using the camping facilities. The Telluride area is presently in the Forest's Capital Investment Program with proposals for the developed sites to be brought up to today's standards. New proposals for several other developed sites have been approved.

Future emphasis - Update the existing facilities to reflect the demand for larger parking spurs, better water systems, improved toilet facilities, hardened campground roads, hardened camping pads, safe and adequate fishing sites alongside the highway. Because of the limited availability of suitable lands for further campground construction, the existing facilities need to become more efficient in terms of site utilization and capacities. Trailhead sites need adequate vehicle parking and horse facilities. Continue to plan for developed sites where appropriate. Examine the potential for concessionairing of developed sites as a "complex". The character of these sites should retain the character of the Telluride area. The potential for the Telluride area to become a hub for mountain biking is high. This area is also the western end of the high country four-wheel drive country.

Dispersed Recreation Areas: A variety of outstanding areas which are capable of providing the entire ROS in dispersed recreational activities have been identified. These are:

1. The Kannah Creek Basin: This area provides a unique, primitive, non-motorized setting and has the capability of being almost entirely viewed from the Grand Mesa Scenic Byway. The existing



trail system serves the area well. The area contains significant riparian areas with excellent fishing and hunting habitats.

Future Emphasis - This area will remain as a non-motorized, primitive area. Ecosystem management will emphasize riparian protection. Recreation emphasis will be directed toward foot and horseback activities. Commercial outfitting and guiding capacities need to be determined. The trail system will be directed toward the more primitive type of trails.

2. The Grand Mesa: This area is the most significant "fishing lakes and streams" area within the region, if not within the state. It provides a major complex for a wide spectrum of dispersed summer and winter uses. Boating, hiking, horseback riding, viewing scenery and wildlife, lake and stream fishing, and collecting forest products are major summer activities. The Grand Mesa Scenic Byway crosses the Grand Mesa. Snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are the significant winter sports, with clubs from both activities being major partners in the marking and grooming of the winter trail systems. As the largest flat-topped mesa in the world, it offers an amazing diversity of uses. There is a high potential for a variety of accessible trails and dispersed recreational activities.

Future emphasis - Provide for motorized and non-motorized recreational activities. Assist local communities and businesses in marketing the year-round recreational opportunities available. Evaluate the potential for a trails system that would furnish all phases of accessibility levels. Water-based activities need to be emphasized along with the total trail system. Market for partners. Promote projects funded by capital investment.

3. The Sunlight to Powderhorn Snowmobile Trail: This trail is gaining national recognition as a significant snowmobile trail that offers 120 miles of maintained trail, as well as being able to furnish winter overnight accommodations at three lodges along the trail. It also furnishes the user with a developed ski area at each end.

Future emphasis - Continue to work with user groups to develop new trails and maintain the existing trails. Assist local communities in advertising the uniqueness of the total trails and the services available along the trail.

4. The Green Mountain, Cedar Mesa and Eureka Trails: These trails are on the state-designated summer motorized trail system and voluntarily maintained by the motorized users.

Future Emphasis - Continue cooperation with the Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and local user groups to provide for trail maintenance and to develop further motorized trails.

5. "The Battlements" Area: This area gives the distinctive visual characteristics and the quality of a primitive hunting experience, and receives regional and national recognition.

Future Emphasis - Continue to provide for the primitive hunting experience. Explore the potential for developing a prospectus which will develop a concessionaire to provide quality hunting experiences.

6. Kebler Pass: This area provides small, various dispersed camping facilities which meet the demand of the summer and fall users. It provides one of the most outstanding opportunities in the state for viewing the fall aspen colors as the road passes between two Wilderness Areas - West Elk and the Raggeds. The West Elk Scenic Byway has been incorporated into the Kebler Pass Road. Several vistas and pullouts exist for photography. It is becoming more popular for mountain biking.



Future emphasis - Continue to provide for the small dispersed camping sites. Improve existing pullouts to emphasize the opportunities for viewing and photography, plan for new parking areas that blend into the character of the pass. Work with the local communities to market "Color-Sunday". Determine the demand and location for a mountain bike route over Kebler Pass. This bike route could eventually connect with Carbondale-Glenwood Springs, or it could loop through Marble then over Schofield Pass and return to Crested Butte.

7. Lake Irwin Area: This area has the historical perspective for providing a regional interpretive program from the standpoint of cultural and mining activities.

Future emphasis - Working with the Lake Irwin Lodge, other private businesses and the Crested Butte community to determine the opportunities for interpreting the area. Partners, such as the Colorado Historical Society, should be identified and invited to participate.

8. Schofield Pass/Gothic: Motorized use and mountain biking activities continue to see more people participating. This area furnishes excellent opportunities for these activities because of the close proximity to Crested Butte. Part of the area around Gothic is presently under special-use permit to the Rocky Mountain Biological Station for research purposes. This offers both educational and interpretive opportunities for the area.

Future emphasis - Inventory and develop appropriate travel routes for mountain bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles. Develop educational and interpretive projects with the Rocky Mountain Biological Station. Retain the small campgrounds and bring up to today's standards.

9. Crested Butte and Mount Crested Butte: The town, the ski area and the immediate area offer historical perspectives and recreational opportunities for the visiting public. The town is successful in promoting year-round activities (i.e., wild-flower photography, mountain biking) and has been recognized as one of the birthplaces of the mountain bike. The Crested Butte Mountain Resort is recognized as a significant national/international ski area. During the ski season of 1991, over 496,000 skiers used the ski area. Both the town and the ski area are recognized as a center for promoting many various recreational activities. The year-round beauty of the town and the surrounding area is a drawing-card for visitors.

Future Emphasis - In cooperation with the Town of Crested Butte and the Crested Butte Mountain Resort, assist in developing and marketing the many activities which can take place on National Forest lands. Concentrate on those activities which will add stability to the economic diversity of the area.

10. Taylor River/Spring Creek: Floating the Taylor River occurs from both commercial and public use. River fishing has increased to the point that new "parking areas" alongside the highway need to be developed. Wildlife viewing opportunities exist during most times of the year. Trailhead parking is available for access into the backcountry. Private landholdings within the Taylor River Canyon are being impacted from the public user. Fall hunting season sees numerous dispersed camping areas being set up. A potential conflict exists between the recreation user and the range permittees who move cattle up and down the highway.

Future emphasis - Develop facilities for river rafting (put-in and take-out launches, steps/ramps, and toilets) that may be needed to protect the river banks and prevent human waste pollution. Develop totally accessible dispersed parking facilities for a variety of activities that occur within the area. Determine the demand for facilities which support these dispersed activities. Work with Colorado Division of Wildlife towards developing "watchable wildlife" areas. Determine if the commercial users can provide additional facilities/activities.



11. Taylor Reservoir/Cottonwood Pass: Because of easy access across the Cottonwood Pass, the Taylor Reservoir has become a destination fishing area for the "front range" populations. Anticipated improvements include the future paving of the entire Cottonwood Pass Road to Taylor Reservoir. This area has now extended into a winter play area with snowmobile and cross-country access. The area also contains various private inholdings which are used primarily as summer recreation sites. This area also provides trailhead access into several Wilderness areas.

Future emphasis - The area should continue to be recognized as providing excellent sport fishing, both lake and stream. Develop a more complete stocking program with the Colorado Department of Wildlife. Continue to improve dispersed camping facilities and trailheads. Develop further winter sports trails.

12. The "Almont Triangle": The wildlife area between State Highway 135, Forest Development Road (FDR) 813 and the Taylor Canyon Highway (FRD 742), is a significant area for wildlife viewing and winter protection. This area presently excludes all uses, including recreation, during the winter calving season.

Future emphasis - Continue to emphasize the need for winter protection of wildlife. Develop methods of providing "watchable wildlife" opportunities without disrupting the wildlife.

13. The Tincup/Pitkin Area: Historically, this area is significant because of the amount of available information concerning early-day mining, grazing and historical Forest Service administration. Within this area are numerous Forest Service campgrounds which provide an over-flow during the high-use periods in the Taylor River area. These campgrounds provide camping facilities at the lower scale of development. Currently, these campgrounds meet the existing demand for camping.

Future emphasis - These campgrounds will continue to provide the needed overflow facilities. The campgrounds will keep the existing character but should be brought up to acceptable standards. Emphasize the dispersed recreational activities that are in the area. Develop interpretive needs for the entire area.

14. The Alpine Tunnel: This area is one of the "hidden" interpretive sites on the forest, and historically one of the most significant. Considerable work by volunteer groups has already rebuilt old railroad facilities and information concerning the Denver-South Park and Pacific Railroad. The Alpine Tunnel is also recognized as the highest railroad tunnel in North America. Long-term planning could eventually connect this area with a hiking/biking trail to Durango via the historic railroad beds (Gunnison, Montrose, Ridgway, Telluride, Dolores, Durango).

Future emphasis - Develop a long range interpretive plan for the tunnel and old railroad bed which discusses the various old railroad facilities along the road and the potential for reconstructing those facilities. Develop partnerships which will assist in providing various dispersed recreation facilities.

15. Lake City: This area has become the eastern hub for the high-alpine summer four-wheeling activities and for winter snowmobiling. Both uses should continue to increase with cross-country skiing becoming more popular. Excellent "watchable wildlife" corridors are present from Lake City to Gunnison. The area between Gunnison and Lake City offers areas of unique dispersed motorized activities, but with a different character than the high-alpine trips.

Future Emphasis - Continue to assist in the total management of the high-alpine, four-wheel drive country. Develop partnerships with local and county governments which will assist in marketing



and long-term economic growth. Emphasize the dispersed recreational potential and manage the recreational resource to maintain the low-intensity use.

16. The Four-Wheel Drive Alpine Country: These roads between Lake City/ Ouray/Telluride have become internationally known for the spectacular alpine scenic four-wheel tours. Access to this area is from two major byways (San Juan Skyway and the Alpine Loop). During 1991, over 60,000 people toured this country and all indications are this use will continue to increase. This area not only provides a unique adventure for the visiting public but it creates an additional economic base for the immediate area.

Future Emphasis - Continue to work with the BLM, San Juan National Forest, county and local government, the local tour companies and the local publics to promote and market this four-wheel opportunity. Provide the amenities which compliment the four-wheel drive and back-country use (as retaining the character of a "true four-wheel drive road", sanitary facilities, etc.). Develop a seasonal recreation position which would be responsible for managing the roaded high country resource. This person should be located in Ouray to work with the local governments and tour companies. Develop educational and tourism information that will interpret the importance of the high-country.

17. The Big Cimarron/Silver Jack Area: The combination of private land and National Forest System lands provides some of the best trout stream fishing in the state. This area also provides access to several trailheads from which spectacular views can be seen. Developed recreation facilities are also available near the Silver Jack Lake.

Future Emphasis - Analyze the dispersed recreational impacts that are occurring along the Big Cimarron/Owl Creek road. Determine the appropriate management direction needed to minimize the recognized impacts and then implement that specific direction. Work with Colorado Division of Wildlife to develop quality trout stream fishing habitat which can be utilized by all segments of the population.

18. The Telluride Area: This area is recognized as a center for cross-country skiing, heli-skiing, mountain biking, summer festivals, and the western destination of the alpine four-wheel drive experience. Photography and other non-consumptives uses provide the visitor with memorable experiences.

Future emphasis - Complement the developed recreational opportunities by offering a wide spectrum of dispersed activities (i.e., hiking trails, vistas, interpretive sites, mountain bike trails) utilizing the mountain landscape. Assist local governments, publics and the Telluride Ski Area to reach a wider spectrum of user groups through marketing the year-round opportunities available throughout the area.

19. The Uncompahgre Plateau: This area offers various unique opportunities for isolated motorized and non-motorized dispersed recreation. These opportunities extend throughout the entire year. The Colorado Division of Wildlife has designated the area south of the Divide Road as the only quality deer and elk hunting area. Deer and elk hunting on the plateau provides the biggest economic impact from the standpoint of recreation. A variety of interpretive opportunities exist across the entire plateau from the Dry Mesa Dinosaur Quarry Paleontological Site through various historic and cultural sites to modern-day ranching.

Future Emphasis - Continue to manage for the isolated dispersed activities. Inventory and evaluate new trails systems for both motorized and non-motorized activities. Develop interpretive opportunities for the Dry Mesa Quarry and work with Colorado Division of Wildlife to interpret wildlife habitat and hunting/recreational activities.



20. **Forest Trails** - As appropriate to the third largest national forest in the continental United States, the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests has 1,647 miles of system trails. Included in this total is 130 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the Crag Crest National Recreation Trail (11 miles), the Crag Crest National Recreational Trail for cross-country skiing (the first designated as such in the U.S. - 7.5 miles long), and the Bear Creek National Recreation Trail (6 miles). Also located on the Forest is the proposed American Discovery Trail and the Colorado Trail.

This trail system, for both motorized and non-motorized uses, offers an unparalleled opportunity to provide experiences ranging from the high desert and pinon/juniper to the high alpine reaches of Colorado's "fourteeners". This total area also provides for a diversity of users that range from traditional hiking, horseback-riding, motorcycles and 4x4's, to the new uses such as ATV's and mountain bikes. Within this trail system is a complete variety of challenge levels, from paved surfaces to wilderness trails. The Engineer Pass, Black Bear Pass, and Imogene Pass areas, which have become some of the most notable four-wheel experiences in the world, are located within the forest.

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests offer 50 miles of trails designated under the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Program. Winter opportunities include three groomed cross-country ski trails and a major portion of the "Sunlight to Powderhorn" groomed snowmobile trail. This snowmobile trail crosses five Ranger Districts and two National Forests with various access points to local services.

The emphasis of trails use continues to grow with year-round activities growing throughout the forest. Various user groups are reporting conflicts with other groups. At the same time, users of the same activity feel that the capacity of certain places is being exceeded.

**Future Emphasis - Management of the Forest's motorized and non-motorized trail systems** need to emphasize a continuously growing maintenance program which will respond to the current level of use by all types of trail users. A state-of-the-art methodology for determining trail usage needs to be developed and implemented. The historic trails system of the late 1920's and 1930's needs to be examined to determine if any old existing trails can be added to the current inventory. A systematic approach should be developed to inventory existing system and non-system trails as to safety, resource damage, design user and challenge level. Once this is accomplished on a forest basis, reconstruction and maintenance emphasis, as well as budget justification, can be established.

New trail locations need to be determined and examined with the input from all trail users. An emphasis will be placed on year-round trail locations (motorized and/or non-motorized). Develop a user education program to decrease user conflicts whenever possible.

Utilize interpretation as a viable management tool to inform the trail user of appropriate uses, ethics and interaction with other users. Interpretation should be done at levels commensurate with the appropriate desired ROS experience.

## **Rural Economic Development and Marketing**

### **Rural Economic Development**

By virtue of the wide range of dispersed recreational activities and the significant concentration of developed areas occurring within the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, this Forest has the opportunity to actively assist local communities in providing for rural economic development. All forest



resources contribute to the economy of rural western Colorado in a variety of ways, but the increasing demand for tourism and the existing variety of recreation opportunities can contribute to an increase in the base-line economy of local communities. Expanding tourism to benefit local economies must be carefully accomplished so as to not degrade the quality of the experience which initially attracted the visitor to the region. Increased tourism should not degrade the recreational resources that abound throughout western Colorado. The goal of rural economic development utilizing the immediate forest recreational resources is to increase the vitality and wealth of the immediate communities for the long run.

This direction will be given an emphasis to improve local community coordination and promote recreational partnerships with others in the public and private sector. By being flexible and understanding the diversity of local community needs, we can better utilize the Forest recreation resources to work in partnership with others committed to rural development.

Assistance toward providing rural economic development through recreational opportunities would generally include:

- an increase of available dollars through the forest capital investment projects which would in turn provide for local contracts or employment.
- sharing and promoting information concerning Forest recreation opportunities.
- marketing the Forest and local recreational opportunities together.

To complete a rural economic development program which emphasizes recreation, four steps must be taken.

1. Communicate to all Forest employees and the public that rural development is a part of the Forest's mission since rural resources, land and people, are key to local and regional development.
2. Include rural economic development considerations in Forest recreational resource decisions. The intent would be to assist rural communities and the immediate region in achieving long-term economic stability.
3. Actively participate in planning and implementing recreational-based rural economic development activities.
4. Develop and provide timely and current recreation research and resource information on rural economic development opportunities.

### Marketing

Marketing is a process aimed at identifying what people want and providing that need for a fee. This Forest Recreation Strategy recommends the classic "marketing" approach which recognizes that the key to achieving organizational goals is determining customer needs and then delivering what is desired in an effective way. The major steps in this marketing approach are: getting to know the customer, the resources available, defining the service themes and a delivery system.

1. "Know the customer" - Who are the users?, What are their needs?, What are their expectations?
2. "Know the resource" - This is "the setting" that the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests provides for recreational opportunities. The key features which make the Forest



important for recreation include those areas previously identified as "**Designated Areas**" and "**Significant Areas**".

3. "Defining the service themes" - This provides the "means" to match the customer needs with the resources available. These service themes are structured according to the major recreation activities occurring on the Forest and how the activities are experienced. For this strategy, the service themes fall into four categories: A. general public education, B. information concerning recreation availability and access, C. recreation opportunities on the Forest, and D. monitoring and evaluating current use, measuring customer satisfaction and projecting future needs.
4. "The delivery system" - Describes how the service themes and any proposed actions are implemented. A key focus of this is to develop a vision for a specific geographic area (see Significant Area) with implemented projects which bring that vision to completion. Another vital component of the delivery system is "customer service". We need to ensure that all employees recognize their role as good hosts and take the time to make friendly contacts with our visitors while making them feel welcome.

There is an accumulation of research which recognizes that every Forest recreation experience involves a "journey" with "expectations". The "journey" includes what our customers -- the public -- know about the Forest before they leave home. This shapes their recreation experiences, just as travel to and from the Forest and the actual activity does (as a day spent snowmobiling around Lake City). The "expectation" is shaped by the anticipation of the recreational activity, the actual participation in the activity and then the memories of having participated. Therefore, it is important to consider the entire journey to ensure that the best recreation experience is provided.

The final product of "rural economic development and marketing" is the development of a cooperative approach which will utilize the Forest recreation resources to add to the stability of local economic bases. The development of this cooperative approach must involve the concerned federal, state, and local governments along with the private businesses which may benefit from visitors who participate in various forest recreation opportunities.

### International Tourism

Within this "rural economic development and marketing" approach is the timeliness to be on the cutting edge of developing a significant role in international tourism. There were over 40 million foreign arrivals in the United States in 1990. Over 50 percent of these people were on vacation while another 30 percent combined vacation with business. Unfortunately, little or nothing is known about foreign use of natural resource lands and their importance has been generally overlooked. However, studies of entries in visitor logs, as well as field observations, suggest that the use of wildlands recreation areas by foreign visitors is substantial. A combined effort which could develop an international market for visiting the recreation areas on the Forest and BLM lands, The Black Canyon of the Gunnison, the Colorado National Monument, Curecanti National Recreation Area, or the Ridgway State Recreation Area would certainly benefit the total regional economy.

Any combined effort to develop an international tourism market for Western Colorado should recognize the various types of facilities and experiences found within the region. The Forest needs to determine where our portion of this demand occurs, some of which is identified in this Strategy. There are numerous other federal, state and local agencies which also furnish a related portion of the recreational needs. A coordinated effort from all agencies can certainly better serve the recreating public.

The regional ability to draw from a greater pool of tourists, including international tourists, may be enhanced by grouping or "clustering" with other local attractions to form a regional complex, which offers a



comprehensive vacation experience and would be competitive with other regions' tourist attractions. Examples of these groupings would be:

- down-hill ski the Telluride Ski Area, Crested Butte Mountain Resort and the Powderhorn Ski Area, cross-country ski the groomed trails on Grand Mesa, and then snowmobile to lodges between Lake City and Creede.
- a summer trip to mountain bike the designated trails around Crested Butte, four-wheel drive the high country above Ouray and then hike the Crag Crest National Recreation Trail on Grand Mesa.
- fly-fish the Taylor River, troll the Blue Mesa lake, and white-water float the Gunnison River.

### **Round the Corner**

As with any effort when looking at recreational impacts, demands, and future trends, it is appropriate to "gaze" into the future. This attempt at defining "coming attractions" can be 100% right or 100% wrong and there is nothing wrong with anything in-between. This "gazing" allows us to consider long-term projects and direction which may or may not occur. The most important feature is that we have taken the time to look around the corner and "gaze" into the future.

So, "gazing" into the future, we:

1. Could have the establishment of a hiking/bicycling trail from the Alpine Tunnel to Durango via the old historic railroad beds which pass through Montrose, Dallas Divide, Lizard Head Pass, and Dolores.
2. Could develop an environmental learning center on Grand Mesa which offers a year-round motorized/non-motorized facility for OHVing/mountain biking-hiking and snowmobiling/cross-country skiing. This type of facility would be utilized to educate visitors and users toward an environmental ethic and it would be used as a regional environmental center for school districts. The U.S. Nordic ski team could train out of this facility during the winter months or the summer months, and the U.S. Cycling team could train on both sides of the Mesa.
3. Could develop a totally accessible trail system for the top of Grand Mesa. This would even allow for hunting from wheel chairs in the early fall.
4. Would construct a mountain bike trail which would run from Crested Butte to Lake City to Telluride and then into the BLM system of trails which presently serve Western Colorado and Utah. Crested Butte would also serve as the hub for biking through to Aspen and Denver via various mountain trails.
5. Need to recognize "hunting as a major event" which is significant to many local businesses. Coordination with timber harvesting, grazing, other outfitter/guides, and other uses on the Forest could reduce conflicts that occur during this time of the year.
6. Need to assure that a "demand" is appropriate for the forest lands. Recreation activities need to be inherent to the forest environment or setting.



7. Need to be proactive in responding to the negative impacts of a growing recreational demand for the usage of National Forest lands. This could include:
- a) increased urbanization of the forest recreation settings.
  - b) loss of the more primitive experiences.
  - c) increased conflict between outfitted and self-guided parties as the completion for available land increases.
  - d) increased conflict between non-compatible users and increased polarization of users as they form special interest groups.
  - e) increased conflicts between:
    - recreation/range.
    - winter recreation/winter logging activities.
    - motorized users/non-motorized users.
  - f) increased urban background of the forest users with changing abilities, skills, needs, expectations.
  - g) loss of access to forest lands as access through private lands is closed.
  - h) rationing of use to prevent over-use of high-impact areas (i.e., high country four-wheel drive area).